

FITNESS

Should TVs Carry a Warning Label?

Obesity and overweight are consistently linked to television viewing. A large national study of eight – to sixteen years olds found that obesity was lowest among those watching an hour or less of TV a day and highest among those watching four or more hours. Among adults, studies report that those who watch more than 2.5 hours are two to four times more likely to be overweight than those who watch less than an hour a day.

Besides being less likely to exercise, those who watch more TV are more likely to gain weight for a number of reasons. Excess weight is also attributed to increased calorie consumption while watching TV, excess eating at other times due to TV commercials, or a reduced metabolic rate, which may occur if you stare at the screen too long.

Excess weight and lack of exercise are both considered possible cancer promoters. The American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) advises adults to limit weight gain to no more than 11 pounds in adulthood. One way to encourage children or yourself to be more active is to limit TV viewing. Guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend limiting children's total media time (TV and video games) to no more than one to two hours of quality programs a day. Reading, sports, hobbies and creative play are good alternatives. It's also wise to keep TVs out of children's bedrooms. Adults can cut back on viewing time by watching only the programs that really interest them. Instead of flipping through channels, the local recreation department, gym or YMCA may have stimulating exercise classes that can become an absorbing new habit.

Exercise While You Watch

Reports estimate that the average adult watches television 22 to 28 hours a week. At the same time, experts estimate that one in four adults fail to exercise at all in their leisure time. One obvious remedy for inactivity is to exercise right in front of the TV. During the commercial breaks in a half-hour program, squeeze in 10 minutes of exercise. Some activities can be done even during programs, like lifting free weights or riding a stationary bicycle.

Source: The American Institute for Cancer Research



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